

Historic Resource Study of Augusta County, Virginia
Eighteenth Century to the Present

Prepared by Ann McCleary, Regional Architectural Historian, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, October 1983.

Ann McCleary came to work at the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (now called the Virginia Department of Historic Resources) in June 1978 as an architectural historian to record the architectural resources of Augusta County. At the time, she was a PhD student in American Civilization at Brown University. McCleary worked for the state historic preservation office through a partnership with James Madison University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Her office was in the Archaeology Laboratory throughout this time.

Several previous surveys had documented some buildings in Augusta County, including two summer surveys for the State Historic Preservation Office in 1972 and 1973.

But when the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (VDHL) began a program of more intensive, county-by-county surveys in the summer of 1978, staff chose Augusta County as one of the first counties to be studied because of its historical and architectural significance. Organized on a contract basis with the James Madison University Archaeological Research Center, the Augusta County survey focused on Augusta County proper, not the two cities of Staunton and Waynesboro. The survey recorded 1,144 buildings between July 1978 and October 1982.

The VDHL developed new survey strategies to try to locate all potentially important buildings. Survey work began with travel along every county road using United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps on a quad-by-quad basis. The use of quad maps helped the surveyor find inaccessible and abandoned buildings that may have been previously overlooked but could well be significant. The new survey goals also expanded the range of building types and styles to inventory. Documentation of antebellum houses remained the core of the survey, but new expectations including "surviving steel truss and covered bridges and pre-1940 residential, commercial, and industrial structures which, in the judgement of a professionally-qualified architectural surveyor, are significant either as outstanding specimens or as representative examples of the architectural and historical resources of the county," were added as potential survey sites.

In the last two years of this survey, additional notes regarding the unsurveyed buildings were recorded on the quad maps used in the field, using abbreviations indicating building type, building material, and age to provide a sense of context for the area. In the winter of 1983, the VDHL survey staff determined that recording of these abbreviated notes could be very helpful and suggested a list of "map codes" applicable to all portions of the state.

Each survey file was to include:

- An official file/site number
- Sufficient high-quality photographs to permit an accurate assessment of the structure
- Complete, fully, and accurately labeled negatives,

- A survey form with all relevant information and such supplementary architectural and historical information as was needed to complete an assessment of significance, with site plans and floor plans of the major buildings. Some included overall dimensions and measured drawings, based on the significance of the structure
- A USGS topographical quad map with the location of the site

If owners did not permit interior inspection, photographs were taken of the exterior and any available information was recorded. Previously surveyed buildings that had been razed were noted.

All original copies of the survey reports and field documentation were archived at the state historic preservation office in Richmond.

After completion of the survey, McCleary produced a 1,000-page report analyzing the known structures as reflections of the historical and architectural developments of the region.

The first half of the publication (**McCleary Book 1**) features an in-depth analysis of all historic properties surveyed in Augusta County. The report organizes the resources by “themes” then being used for the Virginia Historic Preservation Plan—residential and domestic; agricultural; government, law and welfare; education; military; religious; social-cultural; transportation; commercial; and industry, manufacturing and craft.

The second half of the report (**McCleary Book 2**) includes appendices with properties listed alphabetically, examples of floor plans, and brief descriptions of all towns and villages in the survey area.

Maps of each geographic area of the county as well as historical maps are also included, along with information from past surveys, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) survey from the New Deal and the Mutual Assurance Society policies dating from the eighteenth century.

Quad maps contain file numbers of buildings that were surveyed. File numbers can be looked up in the two-volume set. Complete copies of specific files can be requested from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Please cite the quad map and file number.